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Title: “Investigating the Viability of an Alternative Strategy for Sustainable Design Practice in Developing Contexts” - *Case of Karachi, Pakistan*

Short abstract:

This doctoral study aims to investigate the viability of an alternative strategy in sustainability based design practice in developing contexts. This study will form a layer within the ongoing design practice of the applicant, which has been based in Karachi over the past two decades. Practicing in a developing context, where resources and technical expertise are limited but societal needs are ever expanding due to growing communities, the need for researching and developing sustainable design practices becomes critical.

Being a research by design practice model, not pre-defined by any formal or informal agenda. The practice over time did become aware of the constrained positions of the formal capital and clientele towards sustainability. On the contrary, research done showed the success of the informal sector, catering up to 8 million people (60% population of Karachi) by providing; adaptable, affordable, and incremental and culture responsive projects. Despite, being effective, these proactive community initiatives catering to millions in the city and country do not form a part of the conventional; architect - state - developers practice, research or academic models. Consequently it remains; physically undocumented, politically unaccounted for, socio-culturally misunderstood and design wise and technically substandard.

The doctoral study proposes a critical reflection on the role and impact of proactive community initiatives on the sustainability of a city in a developing context. The study aspires to use the potentials of research by design practice model, which would learn from and tie in with the informal sector and its upwardly mobile clientele, formulating sustainable design strategies and projects for the city. This link up is expected to result in a practice model of mutual financial and technical gains; learning from each other, supporting and improving the investments made in to space and city formation by communities, resulting in affordable and financially viable sustainable development for all.

5 keyword : Sustainability, Alternative Strategies in Design Practice, Research by Design, Pro Active Community Initiatives, Developing Context.